

**Published: Nov. 9, 2014, Kokomo Tribune [Page: A4]**

[http://www.kokomotribune.com/opinion/editorial-gop-wins-for-now/article\\_53c5d584-67ad-11e4-ad31-bb43543a5815.html](http://www.kokomotribune.com/opinion/editorial-gop-wins-for-now/article_53c5d584-67ad-11e4-ad31-bb43543a5815.html)

## **EDITORIAL: Republicans win, for now**

THE ISSUE: Midterm elections saw sweeping Republican victories.

OUR VIEW: A deeper look reveals challenges ahead for GOP.

There's no two ways about it, Tuesday was a rough one for Democrats locally, statewide and around the country. But before conservatives get too excited or liberals get too depressed, here are a few points to consider:

- Republicans can now claim the most significant congressional majority since World War II, but that coincides with another milestone which also harkens back to that era. "An estimated 37 percent of eligible voters cast a ballot in the 2014 midterm elections, which would be the lowest since 1942 if the projection holds," reported USA Today's Catalina Camia Thursday. As Tribune reporter Martin Slagter reported Thursday, local turnout has also fallen steadily during at least the last three midterms: from 44.78 percent in 2006, to 43.88 percent in 2010, to 32.92 percent this time.
- Despite the fact the GOP now controls both houses of Congress, don't expect the current legislative stagnation to end. And don't forget the fact that the tea party wing is still at ideological odds with more traditional

party leaders like John Boehner and Mitch McConnell. (Debt ceiling fight, anyone?)

- Midterms are historically difficult for the party of the sitting president, especially one halfway through their second term, like President Barack Obama. This phenomenon is often referred to as the “six-year itch.” (For examples which went sour for Republicans instead see 2006, 1986, 1974 and 1958.)

- There were also a bevy of ballot initiatives in front of voters Tuesday, and a startling amount trended in favor of traditionally liberal causes: Alaska, Oregon and Washington, D.C., have now joined Colorado and Washington state in legalizing recreational marijuana. (Strangely, even though 58 percent of Florida voters approved medical marijuana, it still failed as 60 percent was required to pass in that state.) Alaska, Arkansas, South Dakota and Nebraska voted to raise the minimum wage. Washington state voters approved stricter gun control. Despite GMO labeling initiatives failing in Colorado and Oregon, Maui County, Hawaii, passed it.

- Looking ahead, 2016 is by no means a lock for either party, but Democrats have reason to be optimistic. As Salon’s Jim Newell pointed out Thursday, only two of the 10 Democrat-controlled Senate seats on the ballot (Harry Reid in Nevada and Michael Bennet in Colorado) look iffy. The others — California, Connecticut, Maryland, New York, Vermont, Washington, Oregon and Hawaii — seem safe. And Republicans will continue to struggle

with the same demographic problems of the last two presidential elections including minorities, women and younger voters.

Stay tuned.